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30 July 1958

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Moscow Missile Defense System Goes On An Alert

1. Since as early as 14 July, unprecedented activity has occurred at sites on the Moscow missile defense ring. Although we estimate that the Moscow system has been operational since the end of 1956, repeated observations heretofore have consistently failed to reveal more than a few missiles on a site at a given time. However, on 14 July, two sites south of Moscow were observed with a full load of what is now believed to have been missiles. On 23 July Western attaches observed a site southwest of Moscow with missiles on all pads. Then, on 27 July two sites were observed northwest of Moscow with objects seen on the pads at one of these sites. It is not clear from the report whether the other site was devoid of missiles or was just not close enough for observation, but in any case this latest report raises the possibility that not all the ring sites are loaded.

2. In view of these observations, it appears that the Moscow defense system is on a continuing air defense alert status which may have been prompted by the Mid-East crisis. Observation of at least one of the above sites as recently as late June revealed no missiles on the pads or activity at the site. Although the exact time of the 14 July sighting is not yet known, it is noteworthy that this observation was made on the day the coup in Iraq occurred and was prior to the landing of the Marines in Lebanon.

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OMR/I/GM: [redacted] 4291 (30 Jul 58)

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